

EXECUTIVE DOCUMENTS.

No. 4.

THE
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE
AND
CORRESPONDENCE
WITH THE
COMMISSIONERS FROM VIRGINIA.

CHARLESTON :

STEAM-POWER PRESSES OF EVANS & COGSWELL,
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CORRESPONDENCE.

No. 1.

[MESSAGE OF THE GOVERNOR.]

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, *January 28, 1861.**To the Speaker and Members
of the House of Representatives :*

GENTLEMEN: His Excellency, the Governor of Virginia, has transmitted to me the enclosed Resolutions, passed by the Legislature of that illustrious Commonwealth.

It will be seen that their object is to induce the Legislature of South Carolina to send on Commissioners to meet Commissioners from Virginia, and also from all the States that think proper to send similar Commissioners, on the fourth of February next, in Washington City, to "consider, and, if practicable, to agree upon some suitable adjustment" of the great issues that have been made in the Confederacy.

We are disposed to treat with the most profound consideration every proposition that may emanate from the State of Virginia, and to yield to her almost everything, except what may involve vital principles. More than a year ago the State of South Carolina, actuated by a most sincere desire to do everything in her power to avert the dangers that it was manifest then threatened the Federal Union, sent a Commissioner to Virginia; and made an urgent appeal to her to step forward and devise some plan upon which the States, immediately concerned, might act together; and save their peace and their rights, and yet preserve the common Constitution as a blessing for all the States. It was then thought unnecessary, on the part of Virginia, to take any steps to act in concert with South

Carolina. If our sister States had acted at that period, perhaps something might have been done to secure new guarantees, by which our peace and our chartered rights might have been protected in a common Union. As far as the Northern States are concerned, they have, many of them, often violated their obligations as States under the Federal compact; and the compromises that have been made between the two great sections of the Confederacy have been wantonly set aside. We have appealed in vain to their plighted faith, and to the integrity of the covenant. We have been traduced and denounced through their pulpits, their press, their orators and their statesmen, as unworthy of equality with them as States, and even as their inferiors in a social point of view. Their people have united in overwhelming majorities, at the recent elections, upon issues which openly involve our peace and existence, to put into power a party who entertain the deepest and most malignant hostility to our institutions and to our people. This is the great overt act of the people at the ballot box, from which there is no appeal to any higher tribunal, under our system of government. They have agreed to place at the head of the army and navy a President, not for the protection of the rights and the peace of our people, under a common inheritance; fixed and transmitted by express charters from the very origin of the Government; but with open and avowed principles of deep and settled hostility, and with pledges made by him, at the head of a powerful party, for the final extermination of institutions essential to our power as a people, and to the peace of our society. We have been forced to resume our original powers of government, and to assert our separate sovereignty as a State, in order to seek that protection which we were compelled to believe would not be given to us and to our people, under the power of such a party and such a Chief Magistrate.

Under these circumstances, however much I might be disposed to yield the most profound respect to the State of Virginia, and to any suggestion from her, yet it is difficult to perceive upon what ground this State could agree to send Commissioners to Washington to meet Commissioners from the Northern States as well as from the Southern States. It might only result in deeper and wider difficulty and confusion. I refer the whole matter, with great deference, to your wisdom and decision, hoping in any event that the kindest and most respectful reply may be made to Virginia.

Perhaps it is not improper to state that this State has agreed, through her Convention, to meet delegates from other seceding States, at Montgomery, on the fourth of February, and our Convention has actually appointed delegates to attend this meeting from these States. The object of this Convention of States at Montgomery, will be to form immediately a common Government for the States that have seceded: and by efficient organization to secure their permanent independence beyond the reach of any contingency. It would obviously be impolitic for this State to send delegates to a meeting at Washington, appointed for the same day, to meet the States of the North with a view to preserve or to re-construct the Federal Union with them; when we have agreed first to meet our sister seceding States, to whom we owe our deepest obligations, and feel bound by every tie to make no compromises with any other Powers until we have first formed with them a separate and independent Union.

F. W. PICKENS.

No. 2.

[RESOLUTIONS OF THE LEGISLATURE.]

Resolved, unanimously, That the General Assembly of South Carolina tenders to the Legislature of Virginia, their acknowledgments of the friendly motives which have inspired the mission entrusted to the Hon. Judge Robertson, her Commissioner.

Resolved, unanimously, That the candor which is due to the long continued sympathy and respect which has subsisted between Virginia and South Carolina, induces this General Assembly to declare with frankness that they do not deem it advisable to initiate negotiations, when they have no desire or intention to promote the ultimate object in view: that object is declared in the Resolutions of the Legislature of Virginia, to be the procurement of amendments, or new guarantees to the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved, unanimously, That the separation of the State of South Carolina from the Federal Union is final, and she has no

further interest in the Constitution of the United States; and that the only appropriate negotiations between her and the Federal Government, are as to their mutual relations as Foreign States.

Resolved, unanimously, That this General Assembly further owes it to her friendly relations with the State of Virginia, to declare that they have no confidence in the Federal Government of the United States; that the most solemn pledges of that Government have been disregarded; that, under pretence of preserving property, hostile troops have been attempted to be introduced into one of the fortresses of this State, concealed in the hold of a vessel of commerce, with a view to subjugate the people of this State; and that even since the authorities at Washington have been informed of the present mediation of Virginia, a vessel of war has been sent to the South with troops and munitions of war, concentrated on the soil of Virginia.

Resolved, unanimously, That under these circumstances this General Assembly, with renewed assurances of their cordial respect and esteem for the people of Virginia, and of high consideration for the Commissioner whom they have sent, declines entering into the proposed negotiations.

No. 3.

[HON. JOHN ROBERTSON TO THE GOVERNOR.]

CHARLESTON, *January 29th*, 1861.

To his Excellency,

The Governor of South Carolina :

SIR: The intelligence of the sailing of the Brooklyn from Hampton Roads, received here on the 25th instant, determined me at once not to press an immediate reply to my note of that date, communicating the mediatorial propositions of the General Assembly of Virginia.

It was arranged, between Ex-President Tyler and myself previous to our departure from Richmond, that we would endeavor to obtain from the Government at Washington and the authorities of the seceded States mutual assurances of absti-

nence from acts calculated to produce hostile collision during the period designated by the General Assembly, which assurances being interchanged, would be reciprocally binding.

Last evening, I received a despatch from Mr. Tyler, informing me that the President declines to give a written pledge. I do not understand that he has given or proposes to give a verbal one.

Under these circumstances—informed, moreover, that South Carolina does not consent to send Commissioners to Washington, as proposed by Virginia—it seems wholly unnecessary, if not unreasonable, to ask from the authorities of your State assurances of the character contemplated, which the Government at Washington on its part declines to give. At the same time, though regarding my mission as terminated, it will afford me sincere pleasure to be the bearer of any response which the authorities of South Carolina may think proper to make through me, to the friendly interposition of the State I have the honor to represent.

Permit me, in conclusion, to express my grateful sense of the courtesy and kindness extended to me by the authorities and citizens of South Carolina during my brief sojourn among them.

Very respectfully,

JOHN ROBERTSON.

No. 4.

[REPLY OF THE GOVERNOR, THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT, TO
HON. JOHN ROBERTSON.]

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,
EXECUTIVE OFFICE, STATE DEPARTMENT.
Charleston, January 29, 1861.

SIR : The Governor of the State of South Carolina directs me to acknowledge his reception of your letter of this date, and to communicate to you the great satisfaction which he has derived from your visit to this State.

To the General Assembly of this State, the Governor has transmitted the "Preamble and Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of Virginia, January the 19th, 1861," with

an accompanying Message. In the General Assembly certain Resolutions were adopted; copies of which, with the Message of the Governor, are herewith enclosed.

The Governor is able to inform you, that the dispatch from Mr. Tyler to you, in which he communicated to you, that the President refused to give the written pledge which was asked, contained the renewed expression of the refusal of the President to the same pledge, proposed to him by the Senators of the several seceding States.

The refusal of the President to give this pledge—a refusal, in fact, to abstain from the commission of acts of hostility—was not unexpected by the Governor. But it has been gratifying to him, that you should have become possessed of this information while you were in this State; from sources which, in affording you that information, enabled you thoroughly to understand the motives of the authorities of this State in not having relied upon assurances; which, hitherto, to your honored Commonwealth, may have seemed sufficient to have justified, and demanded, perhaps, confidence in the sources by which they were made.

With the evidence you now have of the purposes of the Government of the United States, it is unnecessary for the Governor to add to it anything, from the more than sufficient testimony, which has for some time led him to the conclusion which you have reached.

The Governor is well satisfied that the ancient Commonwealth, whose honored envoy you are, will receive the report of your mission with the spirit which has given to its name the respect which it everywhere receives.

You carry with you to Virginia, from the General Assembly of this State, “the assurances of their cordial respect and esteem.” In this, the Governor requests me to say he heartily concurs. And with equal pleasure does he unite with the General Assembly, in the expression of its “high consideration” for you.

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

A. G. MAGRATH.

TO HON. JOHN ROBERTSON,

Commissioner from Virginia.

